

DEAD TO RIGHTS

when i would launch into an extended
(was i capable of shorter lengths?)
speech of praise for her or one
of the kids, the ex would listen,
head turned aside, to the introduction,
then before the middle of the middle,
ask: "OK, when does the 'but' come in?"

i insisted she was wrong,
but she wasn't.

A CLASSIC

i was in the heat of a mickey spillane novel
i had assigned as an example of slop fiction
when War and Peace, the endless Russian version,
showed up on educational TV.

i tried but could only suffer
with count vronsky and natasha
no longer than an hour;
they still had eight to go
when i returned to follow mike the hammer
as he nailed his girls and goons.

luckily, i was alone; such sins
are best committed in the dark.

-- Charles Stetler

Long Beach CA

PURPLE

I drink wine all night long
and in the morning
when I go to the bathroom
my lips are purple
from the petite sirah
and I wash my lips once
dry them

and they are still a light
purple
and I wash them again
go back to the bedroom
the phone rings
it's only 9:30 a.m.

I answer the phone
a woman asks,
"is this the sales division
of GM?"
I tell her that it isn't
hang up.

the phone rings again:
"is Gabriel Newhart there?"
the man asks.

"I've been telling you
people for 3 years
there's no Gabriel Newhart
here."

"thank you, sir," he says
and hangs up.

the bill collectors never
stop hunting.

I go back to bed.

"god damned telephone,"
says Linda,
"never stops ringing."

FUN TIMES

Harold was always scared.
he was easy.
we had a good time with
Harold.

we hung him 4 or 5 times
a week.

we had this rope and we'd
get him on the back porch
of Mrs. Keller's place.
there was this overhanging
rafter.